Direct Action Gets the Goods

How to combat offensive Billboards

SQUATTERS UNION DIRECT ACTION PAMPHLET No.1

HOW TO COMBAT OFFENSIVE BILLBOARDS

Most billboards attempt to brainwash the reader into handing over cash for some dubious product or service. Many of the messages are offensive, and all are polluting to the landscape. To deal with them in true situationist style requires some alteration to the wording or art to cause future readers to laugh at the product being pushed: often such "respectable" drugs as tobacco and alcohol - unarguable contributors to bad health and deserving of a dismal fate!

Billboard graffiti is so simple you can organise it around just about anything. Even if you only paint one billboard per week you'll be costing the corporate pushers between $500 and $5,000 per year, depending on your thoroughness. It's a sad fact, but we've learnt through long experience that money is the only language billboard advertising companies understand. Nothing will get those offensive ads down faster than if their profits are reduced by escalating maintenance costs.

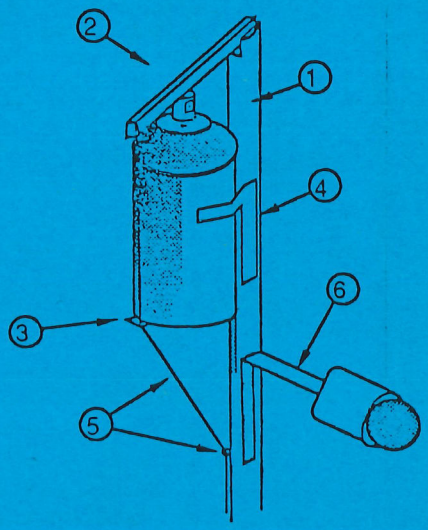
But even more important than this financial factor is the effect that the re-faced ad will have on those who read it. At the very least you'll be Speaking Up for Community Health - something that no government or borough council seems to care much about.

So just to show you how easy the whole operation is, *'circle A'* now presents the Do-it Yourself Graffiti Guide.

First, you'll need to buy and test your equipment. Go to a shop (big chain supermarkets are usually the cheapest) and get your spray cans. Black and Chrome are the most versatile colours, but red, blue, purple and white are also effective on particular billboards. Spray cans must be shaken for at least a minute prior to use. Always test new cans as some are duds.

You can then find your tobacco and alcohol billboards and work out the easiest access and departure routes. Position some body to watch for the rare pig (the filth) who may happen upon you, and to chat with passers-by. Then, go for it!

ILLUSTRATION A



Try to break down the power of the billboard ad by *answering* it. Look at the space available and the way in which the words and images lend themselves to addition, alteration, or commment. We've found humour to be extremely effective in exposing the advertiser's real intentions - turning the ads message back on itself.

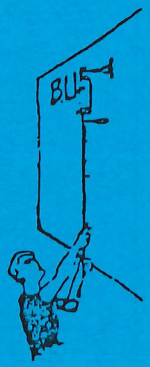
If the billboard proves too high to reach. you have a number of options open to you:

1. Get a ladder! This isn't altogether satisfactory, as you look rather conspicuous and any hasty retreat is made difficult.

2. Build a spraycan extension rod! Obtain a broom handle or some other solid, strong, but light weight pole - the longer the better of course, depending on how high the billboard you want to attack is. (See Illustration A, No. 1.) At one end cut out a wedge, half the width of the pole. Fit a metal bar to the remaining wood (No.2). 30cm. from this end, attach a support clamp which the can will rest on (No.3). Fit an angle bracket on each side of the pole, 20cm. from the end (No.4). The spraycan should slot between these brackets. Tie a length of plastic coated wire to the flat metal bar (No. 2) and feed it through a hole in the support clamp (No. 3) and screw eyes attached to the length of the pole (No. 5). This wire, when pulled, will press down the nozzle of the spray can and paint will spray out. An optional extra is the roll-top of a deodorant bottle, fitted to a support clamp (No. 6). This will help maintain an even distance between the spray can and billboard (Illustration B.) We've had enormous success with these extention systems. They're a bit difficult to use at first, but practice makes passable!

3. Construct paint bombs! Take one raw egg. With a needle, drill a hole in the top of the egg, gently breaking away about a 1/2 square centimetre of shell (Illustration C, No. 1). Insert the needle and stir up the yolk and white. Poke another hole in the same end of the egg, about 3 cm from the first hole (Illustration C, No. 2). Blow through the second hole so that the yolk and white come out the first hole (Illustration D). Have an omelette! Make up a mixture of 50% black, red, yellow, blue, or fluorescent green oil-based paint, and 50% thinner (e.g. turpentine, petrol, or kerosene). Alternatively, make

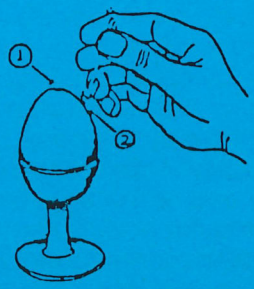
ILLUSTRATION B



up a solution of colourfast dye, mixing it with a thickener such as cornflour over heat until you get a gravy-type consistency. Pour this mixture into a thin-nozzled, screw-top bottle. Seal the second hole of

the egg with a pasty mixture of flour and water or candle wax (Illustration E). Pour in the paint/dye solution through the first hole (Illustration F), and seal it also.

ILLUSTRATION C

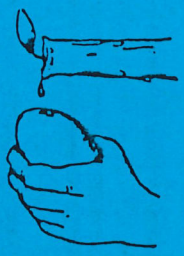


You now have a perfect-sized, semi-biodegradable missile. We've found these little beauties *very* effective.

One word of warning. Contrary to popular myth, the *worst* time to graffiti on billboards is between 10p.m. and 8a.m. During this period, there are proportionately more cops out on the road than at any other time, and often they

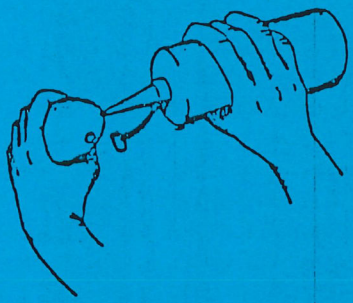
ILLUSTRATION D

ILLUSTRATION E



haven't got anything better to do than arrest you. The majority of arrests (small in number compared to the number of billboards that have been re-faced) have been after midnight. In New South Wales

ILLUSTRATION F



there is the added danger of legislation brought in recently whereby it is deemed an offence by the state for a person to be found in the possession of a spraycan without adequate justification. This "crime" can carry a maximum jail term of three years! This law was of course brought in just in time for the Bicentenial - Hmmm funny that! So check out the law in your state before you do anything.

Well there you have it. Good luck, and see you on the billboards.